

Diamonds are a woman's best friend

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ADDENDUM ON VALORIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Research Relevance

This research effort attempts to demonstrate how new measurement approaches can effectively capture increased data detailing women's access to positions of formal political decision-making across differing regions and political systems. The design of the tool (*Diamond Index*), and goal in mapping it in 40 countries – many of them recognized as “data scarce” – was to test the premise that not only could a more nuanced measurement approach be developed, but quality data could be reliably gathered on a global scale. The challenge was, therefore, to not only broaden and deepen the selection of indicators, but to also ensure that: 1) indicators selected were similar across all political systems and regions, 2) the data was of high quality, and 3) the data could be collected effectively on a global scale.

The ability to include a wider array of data, including from less-researched countries, can help stakeholders gain a more thorough understanding of women's formal political representation. Fast-track quotas across the whole of government, years of authoritarianism, one-party rule, civil war, and tribal violence are factors less accounted for in the current academic and development literature surrounding women's political descriptive representation. Expanding our views to account for the many ways women are moving into the political arena is needed to not only challenge Western assumptions, but to ensure a more accurate reflection of what is happening globally. With better data – in particular if gathered over time – interested parties can begin to weave a much richer narrative in relation to women's presence in the political space.

Research Target Groups

As a democracy practitioner working for a development agency, the genesis of this academic undertaking grew out of frustration with the lack of available data on women in the political space. An explicit goal of this research was to create a tool that that could be replicated by a variety of stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and development practitioners. Using publically available data to the greatest extent possible, the methodology for collecting, weighting, calculating, and aggregating the data was designed to be logical and straightforward in its application. The intent in designing the index was to provide a tool that any group or individual could replicate according to their own need and timeframe. Rather than await the annual publication of gender indexes that focus on

a few global measures, stakeholders are empowered to replicate the tool in their own respective countries as part of a wider gender or political-economy analysis – or simply to better measure and track women’s representational progress. In essence, the design of the *Diamond Index* measurement tool attempted to strike a balance between academic rigor, data accessibility, and practical application.

My particular interest in developing the *Diamond Index* was to measure women’s political representation. Other groups may find value, however, in redefining the tool as a measurement for representing an array of categories: tribes, religions, persons with disabilities, or youth in decision-making positions across government. The index is easily adaptable for descriptively measuring a variety of marginalized or targeted groups of interest.

Research Innovation

This research builds off previous efforts undertaken by the United Nations, World Economic Forum, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Social Watch, and the European Institute of Gender Equality, among others. Findings of the research demonstrated that a new measurement approach, aimed at expanding the available data on women political decision-makers, was viable. This research project was able to collect 86.7% of all measures attempted. Excluding the security domain, where the majority of gaps existed, the measurement index was able to gather 94.4% of the data points. Much of this data – 9 of the 12 indicators – was new information previously not collected at the level of detail offered in this research. Eight of the 12 indicators were considered of high quality. Equally important, the information was culled from a wide variety of countries. The more traditional countries of study – including those based in Scandinavia, Western Europe, or most of North America – were not included. As a result, a number of low-income countries excluded from other global indexes, many of them considered data-scarce and off the academic grid, were successfully included.

The design of the index reinforces the need to reach across all government branches from a horizontal perspective to better identify percentages of women. While acknowledging that higher percentages of women are important, the measurement tool then takes the additional step of assigning differing decision-making authority to selected positions based on a weighting system. This arrangement of data, examined through both a horizontal and vertical lens, holds the potential for combining data in different ways to identify trends and patterns that have not been fully examined through current gender indexes. With this information academics, governments, practitioners, and advocates can begin to explore, for example, where women are

accessing elected versus appointed positions, what level of position, in what type of regime, and under what conditions.

Another area of innovation is the amount of data collected on women leaders in the security sector. To date, most information available represents overall numbers of women in an institution, such as the military or police. By focusing on the leadership hierarchy within national police forces, the *Diamond Index* paints a more robust picture of potential influence women have in the chain of command. Given the importance of this sector in the lives of women and children, it seems likely – based on predicted upheaval from future climate change, conflict across regions, and ongoing terrorism threats – that the issue of security will grow in importance. In particular, how women are represented in decision-making roles, and its relation to high levels of insecurity, remains understudied in the academic and development literature. This research effort provides new data for this field of study.

Research Products

The *Diamond Index* also adds value as an advocacy and benchmarking tool with which to hold government accountable. Its detailed presentation of women's descriptive representation allows for more targeted advocacy around specific branches of government or within institutions themselves. For example, in one country we may see large numbers of women parliamentarians elected but a small percentage of women holding committee leadership positions. Rather than arguing for more elected women, the point of advocacy may be to narrow the disparity in women committee chairs. In instances where commitments are not being met, the index is an easily understood visualization of where the country is falling behind. In instances where a country is exceeding expectations, the tool can be used to leverage greater awareness of gains being made to the local population or a wider global audience.

The *Diamond Index* has been introduced and used by the United States Agency for International Development to better document women's participation in the political space in select countries. This analysis has been used to help design country strategies and program activities. Several "spin-off" activities have also evolved from the original research work undertaken on the *Diamond Index*. This includes a joint research project between the United Nations Development Program and the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. Between September 2015 and November 2017, more than 70 graduate students logged over 7,000 person-hours to help UNDP collect, visualize, and analyze country-level data on women's leadership in public administration. This information will be

used, in part, to support progress of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Efforts to expand the use of the *Diamond Index* as a measurement and analytical gender tool continue at the United States Agency for International Development.